

VZCZCXRO1998
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHAB #0820 2071623
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
R 261623Z JUL 06
FM AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1656
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1396
RUEPBGA/USEUCOM EISS VAIHINGEN GE
RUEPGCA/USEUCOM AIDES VAIHINGEN GE
RUEPGDA/USEUCOM JIC VAIHINGEN GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ABIDJAN 000820

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/26/2016

TAGS: [IV](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER: HELP KEEP PRESIDENT GBAGBO ON BOARD

REF: ABIDJAN 0770

Classified By: AMBASSADOR AUBREY HOOKS FOR REASONS 1.4 B.

¶1. (C) On July 25 Prime Minister Banny asked the Ambassador to use his influence to help keep President Gbagbo in the political process, especially on the issue of identification of citizens. The PM asserted that he never takes a decision without consulting with President Gbagbo and getting Gbagbo's concurrence. However, once the PM begins to implement a program in accordance with his discussions with the President, the President frequently comes back to express reservations and to request that action be delayed while the PM consults further, generally with members of the President's political camp. This was currently the case with identification. It is like a good cop/bad cop routine, with Gbagbo always playing the good cop while his FPI party leaders play the bad cop.

¶2. (C) The PM said that violent public protests against the identification process had him very worried. He was determined to keep the process going, but the FPI was trying to block the process by sending the Young Patriots out into the streets, and if violence became widespread, the political process would grind to a halt. He observed that the overall political climate was still very fragile.

¶3. (C) The Ambassador told the PM that he shared the PM's concerns about efforts to block the identification process and he would indeed raise the issue with President Gbagbo, as he frequently does. The Ambassador commented that the opposition youth groups, who more or less abandoned the streets to the Young Patriots following the killings that resulted from the protest demonstration in March, 2004, are now confronting the Young Patriots, resulting in several deaths and a number of injured over the past week. Violent confrontations will greatly increase the sense of insecurity throughout Cote d'Ivoire.

¶4. (C) The PM, turning to the Minister of Defense who also attended the meeting, said the position of the military remains unknown. He and the Minister of Defense have met on many occasions with Chief of Staff General Mangou, but Mangou is evasive in his responses. Sometimes Mangou carries out orders from the PM and the Minister of Defense and sometimes he does not. The Minister of Defense commented that Mangou frequently receives instructions directly from members of President Gbagbo's entourage. If Mangou is ambivalent or against the identification process, it will be hard to maintain public order necessary for keeping the identification process on track.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The PM's appeal for the Ambassador's assistance in persuading President Gbagbo to support the

political process suggests that the famous Gbagbo/Banny tandem is under severe stress. The PM maintains that he is determined to keep going as long as he can, but he knows that he can only go as far as Gbagbo is willing to allow. The identification process thus becomes a litmus test of President Gbagbo's commitment to the political process.

Hooks